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Securitizing Charity: The case of Palestinian zakat committees.

Abstract

In this article the argument is offered that securitization of the Palestinian zakat committees became a weapon in the counter-terror arsenal of Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) as each sought to exert hegemony over what became framed as a 'common enemy'. The article extends the debate as it relates to the increasingly hostile response by state actors and the international community to the work of non- and semi-governmental Muslim charitable actors evidenced by proscription regimes, financial investigation and prosecutions in this sector. Focussing on the example of Israel and the PA it is contended that the securitization of Palestinian zakat committees was part of a wider policy to inhibit Palestinian autonomy and portray Islamic faith agency as terroristic. Both Israel and the PA, as governing powers, have engaged in attempts to undermine Palestinian zakat committees and their contribution to welfare and humanitarian support in the complex and enduring environment of conflict.

Key words: securitization, charity, counter-terrorism, Muslim

Introduction

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has often been viewed as a crucible of modern-day terrorism and counter-terrorism responses. In the years since 9/11, Israel has frequently allied itself with the wider strategic agenda of the US and other allied states in determining counter-terror responses, which has included a raft of security measures and other securitizing steps.¹

For example, in 2008 Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu went so far as to claim that Israel was 'benefiting from ... the attack on the Twin Towers and Pentagon, and the American struggle in Iraq, as these challenges had swung American public opinion in our favor.'² As Netanyahu's quote highlights, the Israeli state identified strongly with the array of counter-terror measures pursued as part of the war on terrorism and within that, measures that increasingly framed the work of Muslim charities as part of the existential threat facing the West.³

Buzan, Waever and de Wilde's discourse on securitization establishes an important theoretical insight into the motivations behind Israel's engagement with the Palestinian Islamic charitable sector in the period of the Second Intifada. Furthermore, it provides a framework for understanding what I term 'mediated securitization' established by the PA under President Abbas as he entered into conflict with Hamas.

¹ See: Richard Jackson, *Writing the war on terrorism: Language, politics and counter-terrorism*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), Barry Buzan, 'Will the 'global war on terrorism' be the new Cold War?' *International affairs* 82, no. 6 (2006): 1101-1118. David Keen, 'War and Peace: What's the Difference?', *International Peacekeeping* 7, no. 4 (2000): 1-22. Coskun, Bezen Balamir. "Regionalism and securitization: The case of the Middle East." *Beyond Regionalism? Regional Cooperation, Regionalism and Regionalization in the Middle East* (2008): 89-106.

² See: Report, Netanyahu Says 9/11 terror attacks good for Israel, *Haaretz*, 16 April 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/report-netanyahu-says-9-11-terror-attacks-good-for-israel-1.244044>

³ See: Marieke De Goede, *Speculative security: The politics of pursuing terrorist monies*. (University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

Central to ‘mediated securitization’ is the development of a new discourse that frames Palestinian zakat committees as a ‘threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure’.⁴ Moreover this discourse and its actions were not only approved of at the level of defined (and newly defined) national security priorities but were reinforced at a global level and reflected in similar measures and analysis directed at other contexts in which Muslim charities and non-governmental or semi-governmental organizations operated.⁵ One example of this discourse is the work of Levitt who distinguishes himself, among scholars on Palestinian zakat, by arguing that such committees acted as fronts for Hamas terrorism.⁶ Levitt’s argument and method, however, has been highly contested by numerous voices⁷ and scholars including Schaeublin, Benthall, Brown, Gunning and Roy⁸.

Countering terrorism and its security implications had resided long within a binary US-Israeli conception of the Islamic as well as the Islamist among subject Palestinians. Nevertheless, in this instance the PA also sought to leverage this threat framework to counter the political threats it faced from its internal rivals in Hamas. In this article, it is contended firstly that the meta-narrative of the war on terrorism including the funding, personnel and activities of Muslim charitable groups established a permissive environment. This altered and conditioned the future of Palestinian zakat committees where governing authorities turned them into publicly perceived – rather than experienced – terroristic entities that presented a security threat feeding existential insecurities of Israel and the PA. Secondly, it is argued that such measures effectively altered the place of faith-based Muslim charity and left the most vulnerable communities in Palestinian society in the West Bank exposed to deepening hardship. Finally, the measures employed by both Israel and the PA in securitizing the Palestinian zakat committees demonstrates the malleability of securitizing acts themselves.

This article focuses on the framing of these discourses of securitization of Palestinian zakat committees in the West Bank only and does not seek to provide data on Gaza. In Gaza, zakat committees assume less importance compared to locally run Islamic charities and those charities associated with key Palestinian factions such as Fatah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.⁹

This securitization denotes a progression by which the purely religious and charitable legitimacy of zakat committees are emptied of meaning. Instead, the zakat committees are framed as political and security threats. The article highlights a number of factors which led

⁴ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaapde Wilde, 1998. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Lynne (Boulder, Col.: Rienner, Boulder, 1998), 123.

⁵ Jonathan Benthall, ‘Humanitarianism and Islam after 11 September’, in J. Macrae, and A. Harmer, A. (eds), *Humanitarian Action and the Global War on Terror: A Review of Trends and Issues*, HPG Report 14, (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003).

⁶ Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: politics, charity, and terrorism in the service of jihad*. (Yale: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁷ See: Steven Erlanger, ‘Militant Zeal’, *New York Times*, 25 June 2006; <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/25/books/review/25erlanger.html>

⁸ See: Schäublin, Emanuel. *The West Bank zakat committees (1977-2009) in the local context*. Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies-CCDP, 2009; Schaeublin, Emanuel. *Gaza Zakat Organizations (1973–2011) in the Local Context*. No. 9. Working Paper, 2011; Benthall, Jonathan. *The Palestinian Zakat Committees 1993-2007 and their contested interpretations*. Graduate Institute, 2008; Nathan J Brown, ‘Palestinian civil society in theory and practice’, paper for annual meeting of Structure of Government Section, International Political Science Association, Washington, DC.2003; Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in politics: democracy, religion, violence*. (London: Hurst, 2008); Sara Roy, *Hamas and civil society in Gaza: engaging the Islamist social sector*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁹ Emanuel Schaeublin, *Gaza Zakat Organizations (1973–2011) in the Local Context*. No. 9. Working Paper, Geneva: Graduate Institute, 2011.

to this process of framing, securitization and later mediated securitization by both Israel and the PA. It then examines the specific features and approaches that were employed to construct the West Bank zakat committees as repositories of terrorism. This, in turn, emphasises the unitary and rigid positioning of state and governing authorities against the zakat committees with consequences for wider society.

Research design

This article is organized into four main sections. Firstly, the importance of the past parameters governing the relationship between zakat committees and governing authorities is addressed. Then the context of conflict is debated according to normative understandings of securitization. The hypotheses are tested against the zakat committees in the West Bank as a case study. Specific examples are drawn from zakat committees where there is evidence of clamp-downs, arrests, raids, closures and proscription, and institutional takeover.

The article employs empirical research¹⁰ undertaken between 2000 and 2014 on zakat committees, security measures, and counter-terrorism, involving field research in the occupied Palestinian Territories, and Lebanon.¹¹ The context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict provides an opportunity to analyse and compare three sets of actors: state (Israel), proto-state (the Palestinian Authority) and semi-governmental organisation (the zakat committees). Through this case study, involving three sets of actors, it is shown how emergent securitizing narratives about Islam in response to specific Islamist actors altered autonomy, welfare, and humanitarian aid work.

Researching Muslim charitable actors in fragile states and conflict environments has become increasingly challenging. Governments employ measures to tackle terrorist funding. Terrorists are accused of diverting aid and creating charitable 'fronts' to win hearts and minds. This has led to the emergence of subjective frameworks where the agency of Muslim faith actors, as they seek to fulfil one of the primary tenets of their faith, becomes subject to scrutiny, surveillance, and new regulatory measures.¹² The Palestinian zakat committees are licensed semi-governmental organisations, and in auditing relations with the local governing authorities.¹³ They are not nationally co-ordinated but meet humanitarian and welfare needs which governing authorities neglect.¹⁴ It should also be noted that they largely eschew developmental approaches in favour of traditional welfare and charitable support.

Past parameters

Legitimacy is granted by governing authorities and apparent among societal actors, and is a defining feature of the Palestinian zakat committees of the West Bank. In the following section, the outline of the genesis of the zakat committees and their emergent role as

¹⁰ Ethics approval granted from Queen's University Belfast, School of Philosophy, International Studies and Politics REC. All subjects quoted gave informed consent.

¹¹ From 2000-06, during field-visits data was collected in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Lebanon. From 2006-07, data and interviews were collected and conducted on a number of zakat committees and charitable societies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. From 2010-14 zakat committees and Islamic charitable societies in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were the site of data collection, including interviews, funding and disbursement records, beneficiaries, and project overview.

¹² House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee. "Roots of Violent Radicalisation; Nineteenth Report of Session 2010-12." *London: The Stationery Office* (2012).

¹³ Emanuel Schaeublin, *The West Bank Zakat Committees (1977-2009) in the local context*, (Geneva: Graduate Institute, 2009), 40.

¹⁴ Carlos Branco, 'Non-Governmental Organizations in the Mediation of Violent Intra-State Conflict: The Confrontation between Theory and Practice in the Mozambique Peace Process', *E-Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 2 (2011), 79.

legitimate actors in provided. This illustrates the widely held perception, among the governing authorities and wider society of the apolitical role they played. The establishment of zakat committees, the religious context of this form of charity amongst poverty, is important in order to explain the crucial role they played. In other words, the past parameters set out by power-holders and the acceptance of the authentic role played by zakat committees in meeting the needs of the poor gave little to no indication of what would befall them when the political landscape changed.

The tradition of giving alms¹⁵ (*zakat*), their collection, and allocation in Palestinian society has been part of Islam and its manifestation for many hundreds of years.¹⁶ Palestinian *zakat* committees have played an important role in meeting the challenge of poverty and alleviating the needs of specific vulnerable groups such as widows and orphans. In the 1950s and early 1960s, charitable societies based on the principles of zakat were established.

Until the 'reorganization' of 2007, the structures, leadership, activities, and relationships of the zakat committees were for many decades mostly unchanging. Members of governing boards, for example, often stayed in post for many years and even decades. The religious frames of their activities reflected a wider socially conservative milieu determined by patriarchal, patrimonial, and subordinate relationships to the governing authorities. From 1967, this subordinate relationship included Israel as an occupying power. Israeli approval, registration, licensing, and permit processes were also evidence of an ongoing and continuous interaction endowing the zakat committees with forms of legitimacy and probity.¹⁷ For example, the Israel Defence Forces' (IDF) Civil Administration had long overseen the Jenin Zakat Committee.¹⁸

In December 1987, the outbreak of the first Palestinian Intifada against Israel's occupation was a seismic event. Israel responded to Palestinian protest through the employment of widescale military and security measures that severely affected Palestinians in the West Bank.¹⁹ Alongside local factional popular committees, the zakat committees played a considerable role in meeting the needs of the community. Zakat committees responded by expanding their provision of aid especially as it related to orphan care, the very young, medical, healthcare and food subsidies.²⁰

Though Israel deployed many security measures to end the first Palestinian Intifada and frame Palestinian protestors as an existential threat, zakat committees were not identified as part of the problem.²¹ In fact, unlike many other Palestinian organizations and their personnel, which Israel targeted for closure under defence emergency laws, mass arrest, administrative detention measures, fund freezes, or order of raiding of offices/premises and confiscation of papers or equipment, zakat committees remained largely untouched.

¹⁵ Omer Faruk Senturk, *Charity in Islam, a comprehensive guide to zakat*, (New Jersey: The Light Inc, 2007).

¹⁶ Senturk, 2007.

¹⁷ Building License, IDF Civil Administration in Judea and Samaria, 1 October 1991

¹⁸ The Jenin Zakat committee founded and approved registration with Israeli authorities in 1984.

Correspondence regarding Licensing for Jenin zakat committee including Al Razi Hospital, IDF Civil Administration, 24 November 1993.

¹⁹ Jamal Nassar and Roger Heacock (eds.) *Intifada, Palestine at the crossroads*, (New York: Praeger, 1991), Don Peretz, *Intifada, the Palestinian Uprising*, (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1990).

²⁰ Emanuel Schaublin, *The West Bank Zakat Committees (1977-2009) in the local context*, (Geneva: Graduate Institute, 2009), 16.

²¹ Sergio Catignani, *Israeli counter-insurgency and the Intifadas: Dilemmas of a conventional army*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 79-80.

Indeed, zakat committee staff reported that relations with the Israeli authorities remained cooperative. Many believed this was the basis of an implicit recognition by Israel's military governors and civil administration officials of their neutral status and legitimacy. They also believed that Israeli officials recognised that the long-standing service to the poor and needy by zakat committees was useful in terms of humanitarian operations deemed necessary for local relief. Adli Ya'ish, a treasurer of the Nablus zakat committee from 1982-2007, asserted that their work was "all legitimate and open in the eyes of the Israelis ... [they] certainly did not object to us ... [and] came to us as a trusted actor [during the Intifada] to provide food aid." In the mid-1980s, for example, the IDF had demonstrated recognition by attending the Nablus zakat initiation ceremony as a guest.²²

The Oslo Peace Accords between Israel and the PLO in September 1993 led to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) with provision for some governance powers in the Palestinian Territories. This meant that Palestinian zakat committees came under new administrative structures and arrangements. In addition to Israeli oversight by the civil administration, the PA assumed responsibility from the Jordanian Ministries of Awqaf and Social Development of the zakat committees in the West Bank. The zakat committees would now operate under the supervision of the PA Ministry of Waqf and Islamic Affairs. PA security oversight also came with a requirement that the zakat committees register with the PA Ministry of Interior that began to issue annual renewable licenses "at the recommendation of the supervising Ministry."²³

From the mid-1990s, the PA also began to work with the zakat committees. This gave rise to in-tandem efforts between zakat committees at certain PA Ministries such as the Ministry of Social Assistance and the Ministry of Agriculture. In cities like Nablus, the zakat committee was also co-located in the same building as PA ministries including the Nablus religious court, and officially recognised as 'Waqf Zakat Committee.' Under permit from the PA, such committees engaged in projects to assist the poor and needy including distributing aid to orphans, offering primary health care, managing kindergartens and other schools, dispensing food during the religious holidays, and distributing blankets and warm clothing during the winter months.²⁴ As before, the membership and composition of zakat committees remained largely unchanged. The PA supervised and reported the outcome of committee elections.²⁵

Furthermore when the economic dividends of peace-making failed to materialize and conflict resolution efforts between Israel and the Palestinians hit severe obstacles the zakat committees began to fill the void of assistance and help which should have been forthcoming from the PA. In cities like Tulkarem, the zakat committee served as significant community-based actors at a time when poverty rates, dependence on assistance, and food insecurity grew. "We achieved a lot in terms of humanitarian and charity support to people at a time when they really needed it, and where there was an absence of such support from the governing authorities," commented Dr Bashar al-Karmi a senior Board member of the

²² Mr Adli Ya'ish, former treasurer of the Nablus zakat committee, Nablus, author interview 8 April 2010.

²³ EU, EC-FAO Food Security Information for Action Programme, Strengthening resilience: food insecurity and local responses to fragmentation of the West Bank, (Jerusalem: OCHA, 2007), 40. <http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/StrengtheningResilienceFAOAugust2007.pdf>.

²⁴ For example, 'Important Announcement,' Nablus Zakat Committee, *Al Quds*, 2 March 2001.

²⁵ Hebron Zakat committee, for example, appointments to the ten-member zakat committee, founded in 1986, were selected and approved for many years by the Jordanian Ministry of Religious Affairs. An undated document on the letterhead of the PA Ministry of Interior lists the names of the board members of the Islamic Charitable Society in Hebron and states they were elected on September 15, 1995 and a letter from the PA Ministry of Interior, dated June 2, 1997, lists the same board members. In 2000, the PA sent a representative to monitor and approve zakat committee elections in 2000.

committee.²⁶ Certain international aid donors reflected this view. An EU report, for example, recognized the zakat committees as playing “a critical role in the absence of formal effective governmental schemes after the establishment of the PA.”²⁷

Within the Palestinian milieu, zakat committees had made significant contributions to certain kinds of poverty alleviating, welfare, and humanitarian activities. This distinguished the work of the zakat committee from many other NGOs and the governing authorities in the West Bank. Zakat committee orphan programmes were one realm where their assistance was vital. In 2005, PA officials estimated that in one month alone 10,000 orphans were benefitting from zakat assistance.²⁸ In Hebron alone, about 3,000 orphan children (and thus their families) were receiving help.²⁹ Zakat committee registration programmes, in tandem with the PA Ministry of Social Affairs or in the case of refugee camps UNRWA, selected orphans for assistance. Irrespective of the circumstance through which they were orphaned zakat committees helped such children.

As reported by orphan care officials in Hebron, the support provided was the same regardless of whether the orphans were children of drug addicts, collaborators or suicide bombers. After the outbreak of the second Intifada and Palestinian suicide bombing attacks against Israeli targets by Palestinian groups, there were allegations of positive discrimination and that money ‘earmarked’ for orphans was being diverted to terrorism.³⁰ Leaders of the Nablus zakat committee report that the Israeli Military Governor would ‘summon them’ to his office where they volunteered to go through beneficiary lists with Israeli officials to demonstrate that terrorism was not being rewarded. “We don’t judge the child because of the deeds of the father – according to our religion you don’t do this. You must care for the orphan,” said Zakat Committee Treasurer Adli Ya’ish.³¹

Significantly, however, the role played by the zakat Committees in alleviating poverty among Palestinians at a point in a conflict where Israeli security measures included collective punishment measures such as extended curfews mitigated the attendant humanitarian need. Generally, Palestinian identified support from the Zakat committees as important. For example, a series of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Department for International Development (DFID) commissioned poverty and social assistance reports in 2002 frequently identified zakat committees as key providers of assistance and aid to the orphan community in the West Bank including cash assistance, in-kind assistance, education, clothing, schoolbooks, and fee exemptions. Recommendation of strict criteria, the input of volunteer social workers and community inputs to assessment were also frequently recorded.³² The zakat committees were further engaged in cash-assistance and other in-kind resources to poor families. A UNDP/DFID funded report from 2002 into poverty in Jenin reported that, “adopting relief policies in the Social Affairs institutions and the Zakat Committee means providing the minimum necessary for a household’s livelihood with

²⁶ Dr Bashar al-Karmi former Board Director and member, Tulkarem zakat committee, Ramallah, author interview 25 November 2010.

²⁷ EU EC-FAO Food Security Information for Action Programme, Strengthening resilience: food insecurity and local responses to fragmentation of the West Bank, OCHA, 2007, 40.

²⁸ According to Islamic tradition an orphan is defined as a child who has lost their male head of house. PA Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs, Report, 25 July 2005.

²⁹ OCHA, Special Focus, November 2006. Dr Najib Ja’bary, founder and former Chairman of the Hebron zakat committee, Hebron, author interview, 6 July 2004.

³⁰ See: Special Information Bulletin of Meir Amit Centre on the Union of Good, February 2005, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/pdf/PDF1/FEB22_05_680981780.pdf, :34/99

³¹ Mr Adli Ya’ish, former treasurer of the Nablus zakat committee, Nablus, author interview 8 April 2010.

³² MOPIC/UNDP/DFID, *National report on Participatory Poverty Assessment*, 2002.

dignity.”³³ Though the reputation of the committees was thus generally positive such reports did point to reservations about the perception in some localities that Hamas played a role in their running.³⁴

Through the 1990s and early 2000’s, as in earlier times, Zakat committees engaged in other activities in a variety of sectors including direct one-off payment or emergency payments for the burial and funeral costs of the poor but also included emergency medical treatment or one-off costs for hospital care. Some larger committees provided clothing and other forms of in-kind assistance to families at points of need throughout the year. For example, they gave out school supplies, rucksacks, and uniforms for children at the start of the school year, and kerosene/gas during winter to the elderly and, new clothes for the celebration of the end of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr) or Eid al-Adha.³⁵

During the first and second Intifada food assistance in terms of basics such as rice, oil, flour and sugar and the provision of cooked meals were also a key activity. Local donation and disbursement was usually evident in such support.³⁶ Donors from abroad would give meat, especially during religious the holidays of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha.³⁷ The distribution of packages of meat during these religious celebrations was also significant in terms of the public presence and legitimacy of the zakat committees. The zakat committee was present in mosques, usually located in the town or city centre. They would also produce posters advertising distribution and publish notices in newspapers or on walls and premises across the townland. Furthermore the committees would work and organize alongside the PA to host fast-breaking (*Iftar*) during Ramadan. Zakat committees also ran dairies (to produce milk and other products), bakeries, small-scale food production activities and distribute their products to beneficiaries.

Other committees went further in their commitment to provide health and medical assistance, including the establishment of al-Razi hospital in Jenin and clinics in Tulkarem, Nablus and Ramallah.³⁸ In rural areas, zakat committees played an important role in the provision of primary health services including clinic and ambulance facilities where none existed. The Aqraba zakat committee’s partnership with an international donor (United States Agency for International Development USAID-American Near East Refugee Aid - ANERA) illustrates how the probity, commitment, and legitimacy of the committee contributed to the provision, maintenance, or refurbishment of four clinics and an ambulance service for the area during this period.³⁹

Caring for the needy, however, also included those among the Palestinian civilian population most affected by Israel’s policies such as single heads of household, orphans, sick, injured, unemployed, and homeless. Leaders of zakat committees assert that the wounded and

³³ MOPIC/UNDP/DFID, *Participatory Poverty Assessment, Governorate of Jenin*, MOPIC/UNDP, 2002, 15.

³⁴ MOPIC/UNDP/DFID, *National report on Participatory Poverty Assessment*, 2002.

³⁵ Palestinian Authority document, Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, ‘Activities of Zakat committees in Northern Governorate, June, July, November, 2003 A.D.

³⁶ Palestinian central Bureau of Statistics, *Quarterly Economic and Social Monitor*, vol. 1, April 2005, 13.

³⁷ Al-Quds, ‘Salama – Zakat Committees managed a huge aid campaign to needy families during the holy month of Ramadan’ *Al Quds*, 2003.

³⁸ Emanuel Schaublin, *The West Bank Zakat Committees (1977-2009) in the local context*, (Geneva: Graduate Institute, 2009), Lars Gunnar Lundblad, Islamic welfare, discourse and practice. The institutionalization of zakat in Palestine, in Nefissa Naguib and Inger Marie Okkenhaug (eds.) *Interpreting Welfare and Relief in the Middle East*. (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

³⁹ Thomas Neu, Community and Rural services program for the Jordan Valley and Gaza middle area. Completion Report (October 1999-September 2002), *USAID West Bank and Gaza Mission*, by ANERA, March 14 2003, 78-81.

relatives of those killed, including those who undertook suicide attacks against Israel, were not singled out for special treatment. Within the Palestinian milieu, the zakat committees consolidated a decade old reputation for assistance to the needy, financial administration probity and transparency, and distribution to beneficiaries. This was unusual in a milieu plagued by endemic corruption in governing public and private institutions and political organizations.⁴⁰

Palestinian zakat committees also enjoyed important legitimacy in terms of their autonomy from the governing authorities other community or political actors. Brown notes that, “zakat committees enjoy a tremendous amount of legitimacy. Even secular leftists admire their authenticity and ability to operate without reliance on Western funding.”⁴¹ A number of opinion polls further evidences positive levels of public trust. The polls revealed that the zakat committees enjoyed more trust than the PA, local labour organizations, other civil society institutions, political movements, and parties as well as the “Palestinian opposition” and even the main refugee support agency United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Of those polled only schools and universities received more trust.⁴² These polls, along with other surveys and assessments also demonstrated the core distinction held and maintained by and among Palestinians between zakat committees and other actors including political factions such as Fatah, Hamas, or Islamic Jihad. The 2002 UNDP/DFID participatory poverty assessment carried out in Hebron demonstrated the clear distinction drawn by respondents between the work of zakat committees in their area, which was identified as most recognizable and serving a larger portion of the poor than other actors, and “political organizations” which were described as infrequent and “negative.”⁴³ In addition, while such reports were generally favourable towards the work of zakat committees it would be remiss not to mention that they did cite some local perceptions that expressed reservation about the reputation of some committees being Hamas run.⁴⁴ Regardless of the legitimacy of the zakat committees in the wake of 9/11,⁴⁵ they were presented as a new security threat.⁴⁶

Securitising Zakat

This section examines the narratives and policies that the Israeli state created and employed to frame Palestinian zakat committees, their work, and beneficiaries as part of the terror threat. This echoed narratives of securitization that addressed the work of Muslim or Islamic NGO’s across the globe and their funding relationships with donors.⁴⁷ The section focuses on the creation of a new narrative, manufacture of linkages between charity and terrorism, and judicial measures of control and prohibition. It also examines the extent to which such strategies were implemented and their impact on Palestinian society at a time of heightened

⁴⁰ Ann Le More, *International Assistance to the Palestinian after Oslo, political guilt, wasted money*. (London: Routledge, 2008), 69-75.

⁴¹ Nathan J Brown, *Palestinian politics after the Oslo Accords, resuming Arab Palestine*. (Berkeley: University of California press, 2003), 160.

⁴² See: DSP, Priorities under a Palestinian state, survey results, *Birzeit University*, September 2000, <http://home.birzeit.edu/cds/survey/results.html> accessed 1 June 2011 and Jonathan Benthall, *The Palestinian Zakat Committees 1993–2007 and Their Contested Interpretations*, PSIO Occasional Paper 1/2008. Geneva: Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, 2008.

⁴³ MOPIC/UNDP, *Participatory Poverty Assessment, Governorate of Hebron*, MOPIC/UNDP, 2002, 43.

⁴⁴ MOPIC/UNDP, *Participatory Poverty Assessment*, MOPIC/UNDP, 2002

⁴⁵ Fred Halliday, *Two hours that shook the world: September 11, 2001: causes and consequences*. (London: Saqi, 2013).

⁴⁶ Lene Hansen, Lene (2011) reconstructing Desecuritization: The Normative-political in the Copenhagen School and Direction for How to Apply it. *Review of International Studies*, 38, (2011), 525-546.

⁴⁷ American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), 2009. Blocking Faith, Freezing Charity: Chilling Muslim Charitable Giving in the War on Terrorism Financing. *ACLU*, (New York 2009), 1–164

conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and an ensuing humanitarian crisis following Israel's reoccupation of parts of Palestinian autonomous areas.⁴⁸

The legitimacy of the zakat committees, as discussed above, left little or no room for suspicion. They had not been identified as a threat that undermined prevailing security or political order. Even during earlier periods of conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, such as the first Intifada, these committees were rarely framed within Israel's discourses of security and counter-terrorism. Indeed this set them apart from groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad that also organized charitable and welfare activities under their own banners and organizational nomenclature.⁴⁹

In the wake of 9/11 and during the Second Intifada, Israel's counter-terror discourse increasingly focussed on and became preoccupied with the Palestinian zakat committees, their leaders, and activities. This discourse increasingly framed the committees as part of the existential threat posed to Israel by the Palestinians.⁵⁰ This led to suspicions that zakat Committees had links with terrorists organisations not only by the Israeli state but also among foreign donors and funders such as USAID or ANERA. This approach by the Israeli state also aligned with emergent US discourse that securitised zakat and faith-based Muslim charitable giving.⁵¹

A fundamental element of the securitization process by governing authorities is evidence of the passing or enactment of laws capable of altering the legality of institutions. The most salient of such measures were those that proscribed the Palestinian zakat committees as terrorist entities, linked to terrorist entities, or constituting a form of security threat. The designation of individuals as terrorist, the arrest and administrative detention of board members, closure orders, and freezing the financial assets of zakat committees also contributed to securitization. In February 2002, for example, Israel's Defence Minister Benjamin Ben Eliezer labelled some West Bank zakat committees 'Unlawful Associations' declaring that they either 'belong[ed]' to Hamas or 'support[ed] it and strengthen[ed] its infrastructure'.⁵²

Surprisingly there was scant evidence, in the wake of the 2002 prohibition order, of Israeli military, security, or civil administration officials implementing a comprehensive policy of closing zakat committees, freezing their accounts, seizing their assets, or arresting and detaining members of boards of trustees. Raids, arrests, and closure orders against zakat committees, their members, or their assets were infrequent or focussed on the occasional individual. Furthermore, although Israel was an ally of the US in the war on terrorism it did not appear to urge their American counterparts to designate any of the zakat committees as FTOs. Israel did not actively pursue the zakat committees and in many instances continued to work with them on humanitarian assistance efforts.

⁴⁸ Sergio Catignani, *Israeli counter-insurgency and the Intifadas: dilemmas of a conventional army*. (London: Routledge, 2008), Sergio Catignani. 'The strategic impasse in low-intensity conflicts: the gap between Israeli counter-insurgency strategy and tactics during the Al-Aqsa Intifada.' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005,) 57-75.

⁴⁹ Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 2011).

⁵⁰ Buzan, Barry, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. (Boulder Col.: Lynne Rienner, 1998)

⁵¹ Warde, Ibrahim, *The Price of Fear, the truth behind the financial war on terror*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), De Goede, M. *Speculative Security: the politics of pursuing terrorist monies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

⁵² Israel Ministry of Defence, Unlawful Association Order, 25 February 2002.

Framing zakat committees as a security threat to Israel and its citizens, however, clearly lay within a discourse about Muslim charities as links in the terrorist chain post 9/11.⁵³ The heterogeneous and disparate nature of Muslim charity was increasingly subsumed in what Warde referred to as a 'reflexive equation of Islamic charities with terrorism.'⁵⁴ This equation demanded action from state authorities.⁵⁵ This discourse focussed on Muslim state actors, global charitable organisations organised by Muslims, and semi-governmental and autonomous non-governmental actors alike as terroristic.⁵⁶

It needs to be acknowledged that Israel's security establishment was confronted with new forms of violence and challenges during this period and counter-terrorism measures and frames reflected this broadening.⁵⁷ Thus, Israel's military intelligence began to contend that the zakat committees were part of the Palestinian terror structure. The manufacture of this discourse created narratives transforming zakat and zakat committees into specific repositories for Hamas terrorism. De Goede refers to this process of securitization and criminalization as problematizing zakat and hinging on "a third interpretation of zakat ... of a substantial money flow in great risk of being diverted, appropriated, or misused toward the financing of terrorism."⁵⁸ Israel did this by referring to such institutions as being part of a so-called "Da'wa infrastructure," through which Hamas exerted control over the social, political, terrorist, and economic levers of Palestinian society.⁵⁹

Israeli organizations like the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Centre also manufactured the narrative – turning 'Islamic charities into targets of choice.'⁶⁰ Staffed by former Israeli intelligence officers and described as maintaining a symbiotic relationship with Israel's military intelligence community,⁶¹ the Centre began to produce reports that consistently and explicitly correlated Palestinian "charitable societies" and "Islamic charity" to "financing terrorism" and "Hamas."⁶² In reports, produced by the centre, humanitarian and welfare assistance requests were entitled, described, footnoted, and coded by the Israeli researchers as "terrorism-related." In these publications, an array of assistance provided by specific zakat committees such as food packages, school bags, construction of orphanages, and mobile

⁵³ John Picarelli and Louise Shelley, 'Organized Crime and Terrorism,' in Jeanne Giraldo and Harold Trinkunas, eds., *Terrorist Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

⁵⁴ Warde, Ibrahim, *The Price of Fear, the truth behind the financial war on terror*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 128.

⁵⁵ E. Aydinli, From Finances to Transnational Mobility: Searching for the Global Jihadists Achilles Heel, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18 no. 3 (2006) 301-313, J. Giraldo, and H. Trinukunas (2007) *Terrorist Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2007), Victor Comras, Al Qaeda Finances and Funding to Affiliated Groups, *Strategic Insights*, IV, no 1 (January 2005).

⁵⁶ Richard Jackson, 'Constructing enemies: 'Islamic terrorism' in political and academic discourse,' *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007) 394-426.

⁵⁷ Inbar, Efraim, and Eitan Shamir. "'Mowing the Grass': Israel's Strategy for Protracted Intractable Conflict.' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37.1 (2014): 65-90.

⁵⁸ De Goede, M. *Speculative Security: the politics of pursuing terrorist monies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), p. 129.

⁵⁹ Israel Military Intelligence, UNCLASSIFIED, 'Islamic charitable associations in the "Territories" and their connection to "HAMAS"', 19 October 2001.

⁶⁰ Warde, Ibrahim, *The Price of Fear, the truth behind the financial war on terror*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 130.

⁶¹ Melman, Yossi "The terrorist kills, and the bank pays". *Haaretz*. 13 December 2008

⁶² See: MAITIC reports 24 July 2004, 11 June 2004, 7 July 2004.

libraries for children, was described by their authors as evidence of “ Hamas terrorism.”⁶³ At the same time, Levitt utilised these sources to produce narratives framed on the same assertions: employing messaging which emphasised zakat committees at the centre of Hamas’s ‘dawa infrastructure.’⁶⁴ In turn, these narratives linked with lawsuits and state-led prosecutions, filed in the US by Israeli and American lawyers, against Muslim charities based on the same securitizing frames of terrorism, charity, and financing.

In the US, these securitizing frames and their impacts as they pertained to the zakat committees were evident. In US Courts, prosecutions such as the Holy Land Foundation case for terrorist financing, specified allegations of Hamas terrorism linked to the activities of the zakat committees.⁶⁵ The US later operationalised designation of zakat committees along with other Palestinian charities as security threats following the institution of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Special Recommendation VIII in the Anti-Money Laundering Act.⁶⁶ This had significant knock-on effects for zakat committees in the West Bank.⁶⁷ By the mid 2000’s the West Bank assistance strategy of USAID was under significant scrutiny amid accusations by authors like Levitt⁶⁸ that its programmes with zakat committees were indirectly augmenting the coffers and activities of Hamas. For example, medical, socio-psycho relief, and development activities for Palestinian children undertaken in partnership between USAID, NGOs and Muslim charities came to an abrupt halt amidst concerns that development officials could not guarantee that such support was not fungible or politically partisan to Hamas.⁶⁹ New vetting provisions for Palestinian charities and the demand for annual audits underscored the legalistic route of US agency in relation to its increasingly securitized relationship with the Palestinian charitable sector.⁷⁰ It also ensured that USAID

⁶³ See: Special Information Bulletin of Meir Amit Centre on *The Union of Good* ‘Appendix C (4) Defining Tulkarm charity committee needs to the Union of Good, including terrorism-related needs (financial aid to families of shaeeds, prisoners and the wounded’, February 2005.

⁶⁴ See: Levitt, Matthew, Hamas From cradle to grave, Middle East Quarterly <http://www.meforum.org/582/hamas-from-cradle-to-grave>, Winter 2004

⁶⁵ De Goede, M. *Speculative Security: the politics of pursuing terrorist monies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012),

⁶⁶ See: FATF-GAFI, FATF IX Special Recommendations, FATF-GAFI, February 2012, <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/FATF%20Standards%20-%20IX%20Special%20Recommendations%20and%20IN%20rc.pdf>

⁶⁷ Benthall, Jonathan. ‘The overreaction against Islamic charities. *Isim Review* 20 (2007): 2.

⁶⁸ See: Levitt, Matthew, ‘Better Late than Never: Keeping USAID Funds out of Terrorist Hands,’ WINEP Policywatch 1277, August 2007.

⁶⁹ Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza*, 141-142, Agreement, Islamic Society – Nusseriate and ANERA, Grant Agreement Provision Renovation of El Sedeek Pre-School, *ANERA and Nusseriate Islamic Society*, 4 June 2000. Jim Tankersley, Audit: Terrorists Got U.S. Aid; Agency’s Screening Called Inadequate, *Chicago Tribune*, November 16, 2007

⁷⁰ See: 2005 Congressional Record sets forth Vetting protocols for West Bank and Gaza ‘Prior to the obligation of funds appropriated by this Act under the heading ‘Economic Support Fund’ for assistance for the West Bank and Gaza, the Secretary of State shall take all appropriate steps to ensure that such assistance is not provided to or through any individual, private or government entity, or educational institution that the Secretary knows or has reason to believe advocates, plans, sponsors, engages in, or has engaged in, terrorist activity nor, with respect to private entities or educational institutions, those that have as a principal officer of the entity’s governing board or governing board of trustees any individual that has been determined to be involved in, or advocating terrorist activity or determined to be a member of a designated foreign terrorist organization: Provided, That the Secretary of State shall, as appropriate, establish procedures specifying the steps to be taken in carrying out this subsection and shall terminate assistance to any individual, entity, or educational institution which the Secretary has determined to be involved in or advocating terrorist activity,’ Congressional Record-House, vol. 151, pt 18, 24467, (2005), 352.

applied the ‘material support’ clause in the US Patriot Act, Anti-Terrorist Certificates, and the Partner Vetting System.⁷¹

Such securitizing practices went on to deter other state actors and donors from supporting charitable and development work undertaken by the zakat committees in the West Bank for fear of this being construed as material support for terrorism. Funding charity became increasingly synonymous with funding terrorism with even the most respected development, welfare, and humanitarian organizations coming under sustained scrutiny. This made donors increasingly averse to supporting charities where constant suspicion over financial transfers and accountability were placed on third party actors as well. The material support recommendations in the US Patriot Act⁷² are ambiguous enough to generate systemic caution, or as de Goede terms it, ‘speculative security’ in respect of such practice.⁷³ As Cole and Dempsey note, ‘after lying virtually dormant for its first six years of existence, the material support law has since 9/11 become the Justice Department's most popular charge in anti-terrorism cases. The allure is easy to see: convictions under the law require no proof that the defendant engaged in terrorism, aided or abetted terrorism, or conspired to commit terrorism.’⁷⁴ The Vetting system introduced by USAID in the Palestinian Territories established precedents and procedures that effectively, according to its former Director, restricted and limited humanitarian assistance to stricken civilian populations.⁷⁵

Furthermore, the creation and employment of these securitized approaches to the agency, autonomy, and credibility that Palestinian zakat committees had previously enjoyed established an opportunity for both Hamas and its political rivals to claim and over-inflate charity acts in their own name. This provided political opportunities to maximise external support and funding away from this relatively autonomous sector and reorient it to Hamas or the PA directly. As argued in the next section this also established a mediated securitizing narrative which emanated from the Fatah dominated PA as it rivalled, battled and sought to defeat Hamas and achieve hegemony in the local arena.⁷⁶

Mediated securitization

In this section, I introduce the concept of mediated securitization to explain the role played by the Fatah-dominated PA against the zakat committees. This section also focuses on the particular factional nature of Palestinian politics that has pitted Hamas and Fatah into an open power struggle and conflict. Israel maintained, through securitizing acts, that the zakat

⁷¹ See: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1883/2007-WBG-26.pdf>

⁷² See: US Patriot Act (18 U.S.C 2339B), Providing material support to terrorists, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2339A>

⁷³ De Goede, M. *Speculative Security: the politics of pursuing terrorist monies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

⁷⁴ David Cole and James X. Dempsey, *Terrorism and the Constitution: Sacrificing Civil Liberties in the Name of National Security* (New York: New Press 2006).

⁷⁵ Daneil Estrin, ‘Helping Palestinians was an uphill battle for USAID chief’, *Associated Press*, 15 July 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/4d0a6af7fef41abb582c13b021b6765/helping-palestinians-was-uphill-battle-us-aid-chief>.

⁷⁶ Mkhaimar Abusada, ‘Islam versus Secularism in Palestine: Hamas vs. Fatah,’ (Berlin, 8 March 2010) https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/assets/boell.de/images/download_de/worldwide/2010-03-12_Dossier_Palaestine_Conference_Paper_islam_vs_secularism_Abusada_0803201.pdf, Bader Araj, and Robert J. Brym. "Opportunity, Culture and Agency Influences on Fatah and Hamas Strategic Action during the Second Intifada." *International Sociology* 25.6 (2010): 842-868.

committees of the West Bank represented or contributed to an existential threat. The power holders determined that charitable work such as running bakeries, teaching orphans, and providing monies for medicines constituted a form of security issue.⁷⁷ Mediated securitization, however, as Huysmans intimates, acknowledges forms of creating, appropriating, and reworking such narrative and ‘making it do particular kind[s] of work that it did not do before.’⁷⁸ It is my contention that this is what the PA did. It appropriated and re-worked the securitized narratives of Israel and the international community to target its very own licensed and audited zakat committees of the West Bank. The PA’s motives had far less to do with public pronouncements regarding security and order and far more to do with the following. Firstly, the PA (more specifically Fatah) was engaged in a major power struggle against Hamas. Secondly, by acquiring the resources of the zakat committees it could appropriate and disburse to win support and legitimacy. This process of mediated securitization, I contend, reflects a particular dispersed narrative that seeks to reclaim spaces of control and order, legitimacy, and power by the Fatah dominated PA from Hamas.

Factionalism has always characterised Palestinian politics. Hamas however, transformed factionalism into contest, rivalry, and subsequent polarization because of the challenge it posed to the PLO and its dominant Fatah group.⁷⁹ “It was during the second Intifada that the Palestinian political field was conclusively transformed into a field dominated by two rival parties”, the PLO and Hamas.⁸⁰ Hamas has challenged the PLO’s claim to be sole representative of the Palestinian people.⁸¹ Severely weakening Fatah’s dominance of the PA was Hamas’s victory in the 2006 legislative elections and takeover of power in the Gaza Strip in June 2007.⁸² The consequences of this split – commonly referred to as the ‘state of divide’ – meant that Fatah had to assert power in the West Bank if it were to preserve itself.⁸³ Fatah appropriated, created, and used in establishing Hamas as part of a new threat, securitizing narratives about the zakat committees to wage a war. Because Fatah had been effectively ousted from power in the Gaza Strip this was a power-struggle to regain credibility in the West Bank.

In November 2007, for example, the PA in the West Bank published an announcement in the Palestinian press that it would close all ninety-two existing zakat committees and retire their existing boards of directors. The PA also announced it would collect and disburse zakat funds.⁸⁴ The zakat committees were framed as objects of danger and corruption by public linkage to Hamas. As the former head of one of the largest zakat committees in the West Bank contended,

[indent] “The PA action against ... this organization came as a result of the State of Divide and certainly not anything else as is claimed by some enemies about Hamas and terrorism ...

⁷⁷ Waever, Ole, *Securitization and Desecuritization*. In *On Security*, edited by Ronnie Lipschuz, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

⁷⁸ Huysmans, Jef. ‘What is in an act? Dispersing politics of insecurity’, CAST, September 2010, p. 13.

⁷⁹ Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas*.

⁸⁰ Jamal Hilal, Polarization of the Palestinian political field, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 39:3, 2010, 26. Graham Usher. "The democratic resistance: Hamas, Fatah, and the Palestinian elections." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35.3 (2006): 20-36.

⁸¹ Azzam Tammimi, *Hamas, Unwritten Chapters*. (London: Hurst and Company, 2007) and Khaled Hroub, *Hamas, A beginners guide*. (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

⁸² Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas*.

⁸³ Samuel, S., and C. Rajiv. "The Hamas Takeover and its Aftermath." *Strategic Analysis* 31.5 (2007): 843-851; Beverley Milton-Edwards, "The ascendance of political Islam: Hamas and consolidation in the Gaza Strip." *Third World Quarterly* 29.8 (2008): 1585-1599.

⁸⁴ See: Reuters, PA closes all charities in West Bank, Gaza, <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/2007/12?print=pdf-page>, November 2007.

If it were truly about Hamas sitting in the seat and directing terror why wait more than 40 years to act against us and why wait until after June 2007?”⁸⁵ [End indent]

In December 2007, the PA announced the dismissal of hundreds of zakat committee employees. Employees of the zakat committees not only engaged in the day-to-day running of such institutions but also ran health, welfare, education, and income generation projects. The head of the Nablus zakat-run Safa Dairy, Ahmad Abd-El-Fattah, acknowledged that 50% of his staff had been sacked. He complained that under the new regime there was “PA interference in everything.” Drawing a direct linkage between the ailing fortunes of the dairy and the state of divide between Hamas and Fatah he said, “The interference of the Ministry has led to the resignation of the newly appointed Committee. We have offered our resignation in protest at this interference and the political nature of some of it – especially in terms of employment.”⁸⁶

The creation of discourse as political interference in the new zakat committees was apparent when even self-confessed Fatah members complained to the PA and sudden resignations were tendered. “I am Fatah. The change of administration in the zakat committee has not helped Fatah at all, because they are demanding that we now give the aid packages [food] to Fatah people only. Why should I give to Fatah only? Even though I am Fatah member how can I do this? Zakat means giving the aid to whoever needs it regardless of their political affiliation. When they made this demand some of us said we would offer our resignations in protest. Look – zakat committees are not for politics. Not for politics of the members and the workers. Not for politics in the people who give and who get food or orphans support or books or treatment or *Eid* [religious festival] meat.”⁸⁷

The diffusion and making ‘one’s own’ was discoverable when the Fatah-dominated PA then announced the activation of a ‘Central Zakat Fund’ for the coordination and running of the zakat system throughout the West Bank.⁸⁸ The move effectively ensured the termination of the autonomy and independence that was previously enjoyed by zakat committees and to which in large part they derived such high levels of public trust. The Ministry of Awqaf and Ministry of Finance would now determine the nature and composition of any future zakat committee structure, operation, and financial management. This meant that power and resources were appropriated by the PA.

In early 2008, Hassan Tahboub the Director General of the Central Zakat Fund announced the establishment of new zakat committees. The PA permitted only 11 new zakat committees. Membership of Boards of Trustees would be determined according to nomination from PA governors, heads of municipalities, and directors of chambers of commerce. Nominations would then be forwarded to the Ministry of Interior for “security checks” before membership was announced. The PA “security checks” were coded determination to ensure that any individual with a hint of Islamist or Hamas tendencies was to be screened out. The level of PA determination, revealed in a WikiLeaks cable, detailed a PA official saying that Hamas were to be kept out from the sector.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Sheikh Abdel-Rahman Hanbali, founder of Nablus zakat committee, Nablus, author interview, 14 September 2010.

⁸⁶ Mr Ahmad Abd-El-Fattah, Safa dairy Nablus, Nablus, author interview 29 April 2010.

⁸⁷ Mr Wasef M’alla, Nablus zakat committee, Nablus, author interview 28 April 2010.

⁸⁸ Announcement of the Palestinian Authority, 5 December 2007, *Al-Ayyam* newspaper.

⁸⁹ Wikileaks cable, ‘US Consulate Jerusalem, Doj attorneys discuss zakat committees with awqaf ministry’, 7 August 2008,

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=08JERUSALEM1451&q=bank%20hamas%20west%20zakat>

In practice, the membership of the new committees resulted in a power tilt to publicly known Fatah personalities. One such new appointee admitted that public trust, and hence donations to the work of zakat committees were soon impacted, “I must admit it is quite a difficult job because people now affiliate us with Fatah and are punishing us because of Fatah's reputation regarding corruption with money. This is the political price for meddling in the zakat committees and people are not inclined to donate to us.”⁹⁰

As the quote above demonstrates, one of the most apparent and immediate consequences of the extension of PA appropriation and re-working of Israeli securitizing narratives and control of the zakat system in the West Bank was a reported drop in public trust. This led to a correlating decline in donations and hence assistance to the poorest sectors of society in terms of social net activity.⁹¹ The plan to control resources had backfired. Until open conflict between Hamas and Fatah emerged zakat committees, along with other Muslim charitable associations in the West Bank, were acknowledged as fundamental to welfare provision.⁹² Though the PA, through the Ministry of Awqaf and Ministry of Finance now had direct control of a further elements of poverty-alleviation practices in the West Bank there has been little evidence of a proactive linkage established within the PA to the Ministry of Social Affairs or other service providers such as education, agriculture, development and economy.

Since 2008 the PA has struggled to run the new zakat system and been challenged by the fact that many of the new zakat appointees had little or no experience in such provision. Although some personnel changes were reported it is widely accepted, even by the PA itself, that it has not been able to run the new zakat system in ways comparable to the previous levels of service provision. A perception also grew that the zakat committee system was now purloined by Fatah and that distribution policies were increasingly factional in terms of beneficiaries.

This had an allegedly substantive impact on the willingness of donors to give. One source was quoted as saying, “since the government took over the zakat committee last year, we haven't received a penny from local donors ... And the same thing can be said about donations from Muslims in the Gulf.”⁹³ The Fatah-supporting director of an orphan society was even more candid, “The funding ... has been reduced substantially since the action of the PA not only in terms of internal donation but external donation as well.”⁹⁴ One zakat committee leader explained the reality of measures, “there is interference and pressure all the time ... In the distribution of aid to the people in the different villages the Ministry is also interfering ... and want us to give to Fatah only in order to weaken Hamas. I distributed meat last *Eid al Adha* without saying to anyone ‘show me your ID.’ I refuse to comply with this condition put by the Ministry. This year we are looking at less and less donations ... Why? I think ... our credibility among the public is still shaky and many associate us with the corruption and agenda seekers.”⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Sheikh Aref, Nablus, author interview, 28 April 2010.

⁹¹ Deepti Ameta, “Social Protection and Safety Nets in Palestine” *Institute of Development Studies*, December 2015 <https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/SocialprotectionandsafetynetsinPalestine.pdf>

⁹² International Crisis Group, *Islamic social welfare activism in the occupied Palestinian Territories: a legitimate target?* Middle East Report, no. 13, 2 April 2003, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/israel-palestine/013-islamic-social-welfare-activism-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territories-a-legitimate-target.aspx>.

⁹³ Khaled Amaryeh, Still struggling, *al-Ahram*, 11-17 September 2008, issue 194.

⁹⁴ Mr Nael Abdel Rahman Director of Bethlehem Orphan Care Society, Bethlehem, author interview, 29 April 2010.

⁹⁵ Mr Wasef Mallah, Nablus, author interview, 28 April 2010

The resultant funding emergency reflected a crisis of trust from local and international donors who were aware of Fatah control of the zakat committees and its reputation for corruption and nepotism.⁹⁶ The crisis of trust stemmed not from the securitizing narrative, however, but from the extension of Fatah's control over the zakat committees. The Fatah-dominated PA is notoriously corrupt and lacks transparency.⁹⁷ The PA's reputation for administrative inefficiency⁹⁸ was also problematic when weighed against the claim that the reason why the zakat system would be centralised was to promote efficiency in aid distribution.⁹⁹

In the power struggle evinced in the mediated securitization of the zakat committees Fatah was targeting the wrong residue of support and benefit. Palestinians had not accessed these safety net services out of partisan support for Hamas. Nor was there evidence that Hamas had ever controlled such zakat committees. Instead, Fatah underscored its own partisan manipulation of services and beneficiaries in extension of powerful client-patron networks.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the Fatah-dominated PA employed securitizing narratives to appropriate important social-welfare resources from a largely independent, audited, and reliable system with a reputation for probity. Officials of the PA then took these resources into a corrupt and opaque system of governance yet because of poor perception of PA-Fatah accountability donations for such assistance then went into rapid decline. The losers, in terms of this securitizing narrative, was not Hamas but some of the most vulnerable elements of Palestinian society.

Conclusion

This article analysed the securitization that Palestinian zakat committees. This is evidenced, not only by Israel's identification of such committees as a repository of threat, but also by what I referred to as the PA's own processes of mediated securitization. As Israel linked the war on terrorism and its own counter-terror agenda to the Palestinian charitable sector and particular concerns that Islamic charities were fronts for Hamas terrorism the PA also played a part but in its own created way.

I have also examined and provided empirical evidence relating to the evolution and impact of Palestinian zakat committees in the West Bank and policies by the PA to defeat its autonomy and effect. To this end, I have outlined the historical context in which Palestinian zakat committees have evolved as a Palestinian Muslim rather than politically factional emblem of charity and assistance. Remarkably, given the highly politicised environment that such committees operated in, the zakat groupings endured for a long time in terms of maintaining high degrees of autonomy from governing authorities. Furthermore, to date, the PA has failed to successfully to replicate the provision ethos developed within the Palestinian zakat system.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Emanuel Schaublin, *The West Bank Zakat Committees (1977-2009) in the local context*, (Geneva: Graduate Institute, 2009).

⁹⁷ See: AMAN Annual Report 2015 <https://www.aman-palestine.org/en/activities/5958.html>

⁹⁸ Ann Le More, *International Assistance to the Palestinian after Oslo, political guilt, wasted money*. (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁹⁹ Hassan Tahboub, 'The restructuring of the Zakat committees aims at rectifying their legal status', *Humanity Voice*, http://www.humanityvoice.net/news_details.php?id=166&PageNo=251 21 April 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Tariq Dana, Corruption in Palestine: A self-enforcing system, Shabaka, 18 August 2015, <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/corruption-in-palestine/>

¹⁰¹ Emanuel Schaeublin, *Role and Governance of Islamic Charitable Institutions: Gaza Zakat Organizations (1973–2011) in the Local Context*, (Geneva: CCDP working paper, 2011), 79-83.

Since 2007, the actions of the PA against the zakat system in the West Bank have succeeded in making the zakat system politically partisan and have hindered the alleviation of poverty among vulnerable Palestinian groups such as orphans. Securitization of the Palestinian zakat committees is all but complete. The proto-Palestinian state, in the form of the PA is largely estranged from the wider Palestinian NGO sector and early post Oslo enthusiasm for building a state (and peace within society and across it to Israel) hand-in-hand is becoming a distant memory.¹⁰²

The targeting of the zakat committees by Israel and the PA, in terms of wider campaigns of suppressing opposition in the West Bank, has severely undermined charitable activity that had thrived successfully for centuries. The establishment and mediated practices of the securitization of Palestinian zakat committees is problematic in a fragile conflict ridden environment where substantial civilian populations precariously exist and exhibit deepening dependencies on humanitarian aid and assistance.

¹⁰² Michelle I. Gawerc, and Ned Lazarus. 'Doing No Harm? Donor Policies and Power Asymmetry in Israeli/Palestinian Peacebuilding.' *Peace & Change* 41 no. 3 (2016) 386-397, Erling Hess Johnsen, 'Whose Civil Society? A critical discourse analysis of USAID and Palestinian NGOs' (University of Oslo 2014).